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THE APOCRYPHAL CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PAUL AND THE CORINTHIANS

BY

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1. Introduction

Apart from the well known epistles to the Laodiceans and the Alexandrians which go under Paul's name, but which were written by the Marcionites according to *Canon Muratori*, we possess an equally apocryphal correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians. This correspondence consists of three parts: I. a letter written by the Corinthians to Paul with a number of questions, II. a story about those taking the message and its receipt by Paul who is in prison at that time, and III, a letter written by Paul with the answers on the questions raised by those in Corinth.

Up to a few years ago this correspondence was only known in Latin, Armenian and Coptic. Since, however, a text of this correspondence has been published in its original Greek form in 1959, we may re-open the discussion with regard to the many questions raised by it.

2. The Tradition of the Text of the Correspondence

a. The Armenian Text

The correspondence is found in a number of manuscripts of the New Testament. P. Vetter has tried to restore the original Armenian version with help of 11 Armenian mss. This text has been translated into German.[1] Usually the three parts of the correspondence are available, but a ms in Smyrna omits I 1–16 and III 1–10.

b. The Latin Text

This text is available in five different manuscripts:

[1] The Armenian text in P. Vetter, *Der apokryphe dritte Korintherbrief*, in: *Tübinger Universitätsschriften* 1893/94, p. 41–52. The German translation in P. Vetter, *Der apokryphe dritte Korintherbrief*, in: *Theol. Quartalschr.* 73 (1890), p. 610–639, p. 615–624. A French translation in A. Carrière et S. Berger, *La correspondance apocryphe de Saint Paul et les Corinthiens*, in: *Rev. de Théol. et de Phil.* 24 (1891), p. 333–351, p. 347–351.

L_1 (sometimes: M) in a ms of the bible written in the tenth century, now in Milan, without II.[2]

L_2 (sometimes: L) in a ms of the bible written in the thirteenth century, now in Laon, without II.[3]

P on two separate pages from a codex written in the thirteenth century, now in Paris, without I and II.[4]

Z on some separate pages from a codex of the bible from the tenth century, now in Zürich without III.[5]

B in a ms of the bible written in the thirteenth century, now in Berlin without II.[6]

c. The Commentary of Ephrem Syrus on the Pauline Epistles

The correspondence is also dealt with in Ephrem's commentary on the Pauline Epistles which is only known in the Armenian language. The Armenian text has been published by the Mechitarists in 1836.[7] They published a Latin translation of this commentary in 1893.[8] The correspondence was translated into German by P. Vetter[9] and S. Kanajanz.[10] The three parts are available.

[2] See Carrière–Berger, *art. c.*, and the review by Harnack in *Theol. Literaturz.* 17 (1892), c. 2–4.

[3] E. Bratke, *Ein zweiter lateinischer Text des apokryphen Briefwechsels zwischen dem Apostel Paulus und den Korinthern*, in: *Theol. Literaturz.* 17 (1892), c. 585–588. The mss L_1 and L_2 also in A. Harnack, *Untersuchungen über den apokryphen Briefwechsel der Korinther mit dem Apostel Paulus*, in: *Sitz.ber. Preuss. Akad. der Wissensch.* 1905, p. 3–35. It appears that L_1 is a literal translation of a Greek text. L_2 shows better Greek and goes back to a better Greek ms, but it was written with help of L_1.

[4] D. de Bruyne, *Un nouveau manuscrit de la troisième lettre de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, in: *Rev. Bénédict.* 25 (1908), p. 431–434.

[5] D. de Bruyne, *Un quatrième manuscrit latin de la correspondance apocryphe de Saint Paul avec les Corinthiens*, in: *Rev. Bénédict.* 45 (1933), p. 189–195.

[6] H. Boese, *Über eine bisher unbekannte Handschrift des Briefwechsels zwischen Paulus und den Korinthern*, in: *Zeitschr. neut. Wissensch.* 44 (1952/53), p. 66–76. In the mss in which we find P, Z and B we also find the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans.

[7] Published as part III of the works of Ephrem in Armenian, Venice.

[8] *S. Ephraemi Syri commentarii in epistolas D. Pauli nunc primum ex Arm. in Lat. serm. a patribus Mekitharistis translati*, Venetiis 1893, p. 117–124.

[9] See articles quoted (n. 1) in *Theol. Quartalschr.*, p. 627–639, and *Tübinger Universitätsschr.*, p. 70–79.

[10] In Th. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* II 2, Erlangen-Leipzig 1892, p. 595–606.

d. The Coptic Text

This text is available in the fragments left of the Coptic translation of the Acts of Paul written in the sixth century. The three parts are available.[11]

e. The Greek Text

This text has been discovered among the Bodmer-Papyri (number X). The manuscript has been dated to the third century. Part II is not available.[12]

From this summary it can be seen that the contents are deviating in the different versions and texts. Sometimes II is available (Arm., Z, Ephr., Copt.), sometimes it is missing (L_1, L_2, P, B, Gr.). An other deviation can be found in III, where sometimes the verses 14, 22–23, 35 are available (Arm., L_1, P, B) and sometimes they are missing (Ephr., L_2, Gr.).

Finally it appears that:

the correspondence was part of the New Testament in Syria (see Ephrem's commentary),

the correspondence was part of the Armenian New Testament,

the correspondence was part of the Acts of Paul written roundabout the year 170,

the correspondence was known as a separate writing in Egypt in the third century.

3. The present Position of the Inquiries into the Text

Originally the correspondence was only known in the Armenian language and from Ephrem's commentary. For this reason it was supposed that the correspondence originated from Syria and that it was written against the followers of Bardaisan. The last supposition is in accordance with Ephrem's remarks in his commentary.[13] This idea gained wide-spread influence[14] until the discovery of

[11] C. Schmidt, *Acta Pauli*, Leipzig 1904, p. 73–82.

[12] *Papyrus Bodmer X–XII*, publié par M. Testuz, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana 1959, p. 30–45.

[13] Vetter, in: *Theol. Quartalschr.*, p. 611–612, and *Tüb. Universitätsschr.*, p. 17–20.

[14] Though Carrière in Carrière–Berger, *art. c.*, was justified in accepting a Greek basis for the Armenian translation, we see that Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, Leipzig 1958², I I, p. 39, and E. Rollfs, in:

Latin mss of the correspondence. Though some tried to prove that the Latin text had been translated from the Syriac version,[15] the Coptic version showed that the correspondence was originally written in Greek and that the Latin translation was based on a Greek text.[16] This supposition has been definitively proved by the discovery of a Greek version.

At the time that the correspondence was only known in Armenian and from Ephrem's commentary, Th. Zahn supposed that the correspondence was originally part of the Acts of Paul.[17] He based this idea on the descriptive part II. This supposition was corroborated by the discovery of a number of fragments of the Acts of Paul which also contained the correspondence.

Since in the newly found Greek version part II is missing the question has been raised whether I and III form an independent writing which was added to the Acts of Paul at a later date.[18] In this article we shall deal with this matter.

From this summary it appears that the inquiries into the correspondence are mainly limited to the tradition of the text. The contents of the writing have been subjected to a superficial investigation only.[19] We also like to deal with this subject.

E. Hennecke, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, Tübingen 1924², p. 195, both influenced by Vetter, supposed a Syriac origin. Even Zahn, who supposed a Greek origin in *Geschichte*, p. 609, rejected this opinion *ibid.*, p. 1016–1019.

15 Vetter, *Tüb. Universitätsschr.*, p. 9–12, tries to show some Syriasms in the Latin text. They have to be ascribed to a lack of knowledge of the Latin language on the part of the scribe of L_1.

16 Especially Harnack became convinced of a Greek origin of the correspondence. He even tried to retranslate the Coptic version into Greek, *Untersuchungen*.

17 Zahn, *Geschichte*, p. 606–611. Though Harnack, *Geschichte* I I, p. 39 and II I, p. 506, was still convinced that the correspondence was an independent writing, he tried to prove in *Untersuchungen* that is was originally part of the Acts of Paul. For this reason he pointed to a number of parallels in the correspondence and the Acts. C. Schmidt–W. Schubart, *Acta Pauli*, Glückstadt-Hamburg 1936, p. 122–123, pointed to parallels between the correspondence and the Greek fragments of the Acts of Paul.

18 See Testuz, *o.c.*, p. 23–25, and M. Testuz, *La correspondance apocryphe de Saint Paul et les Corinthiens*, in: *Littérature et Théologie Pauliniennes*, in: *Rech. Bibl.* V, Desclée de Brouwer 1960.

19 We may point to the following studies: M. Muretow, *Über den apokryphen Briefwechsel des Apostels Paulus mit den Korinthern*, in: *Theol.*

4. The Contents of the Correspondence

The letter written by the Corinthians and sent by Stephan (cf. I Cor. 1, 16 and 16, 15 and 17) and four elders says that Simon and Cleobius have arrived in Corinth with false teachings. The Corinthians hope that Paul is able to help them in their difficulties. In the second part of the epistle the teachings are summed up as follows: "They say that one must not use the prophets, nor that God is almighty, nor that a resurrection of the flesh exists, nor that the creation of men is by God, nor that the Lord has come into the flesh, nor that He is born of Mary, nor that the world is of God, but of angels".

In the second part (II) it is said that the epistle was taken to Philippi by Threptus and Eutychus. Paul receives the epistle in great distress since he is emprisoned, but he writes his answer.

Paul writes that he has handed down that which he had received from the apostles, namely that Jesus is born from Mary because of the Holy Spirit which was sent to her from the Father in heaven to save all flesh and that man has been created by his Father. God the almighty has sent prophets to the Jews who were provided with parts of the Spirit of Christ and who taught the true religion. The ruler (ἄρχων) has bound all flesh, but the almighty God has sent the Spirit to Mary in order to defeat the evil one by the same flesh in which the evil one lived. Finally a few examples of the resurrection of the flesh are given. He speaks about the seed of grain that grows clothed with a body (cf. I Cor. 15, 37), about the history of Jonah and about the story of the grave of Elisah (cf. II Ki. 13, 21). The epistle closes with the order to keep to the rule which they had received by way of the prophets and the gospel.

Boten 1896 (not available), who identified the false teaching with that of Simon Magus. A. Berendts, *Zur Christologie des apokryphen* 3. *Korintherbriefes*, in: *Abhandl. A. v. Oettingen*, München 1898, p. 1–28, who considers III Cor. with Hermas and II Clement representatives of a pneumatic christology. F. Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien adversus Marcionem*, in: *Texte u. Unters.* 44 (1930), p. 148–157, supposes a "Geistchristologie" for both the correspondence and the Acts of Paul. M. Rist, *Pseudepigraphic Refutations of Marcionism*, in: *Journ. of Religion* 22 (1942), p. 36–62, supposed that Marcion and Apelles were rejected in the correspondence.

5. The Greek Text compared with the Translations

Generally speaking it can be said that the Greek text does not show many readings which are not known already from other texts. However, we like to point to the following variant readings:

I 3–4 reads: "For we have not heard such words neither from you nor from the other ones". All other texts show the reading "the other apostles" in stead of "the other ones". The Greek text must be original. This text appears to be in agreement with Paul's position in comparison with the twelve apostles. Nor in I neither in III Paul is called by the name "apostle". It can even be said that a sharp distinction is made between Paul and the apostles, as appears from III 4: "For I have handed down to you from the beginning which I also received from the apostles who have been with Jesus before me all the time". Paul is dependent on the apostles. The passage has obviously been inspired by I Cor. 11, 23, but the correspondence gives a position to Paul quite different from that which Paul gave to himself, since it reads "the apostles" in place of "the Lord". This position, however, is in agreement with the one given to him in the early church in which the twelve apostles become more and more important at the cost of Paul.[20] The "other ones" mentioned in this passage can be compared with those about whom Paul speaks in I Cor. 3, 10: ". . . I laid a foundation, and another one is building upon it".

I 7–8 reads: ". . . come either yourself – because we believe, as has been revealed to Theonoe that the Lord has saved you from the hand of the lawless one – or answer us". In this passage we find three different parts: 1. an invitation to come, 2. an information about Theonoe, and 3. a question to answer. In the manuscripts we find the three parts in the following order:

Arm.	: 3–1–2
Z and L_1	: defective
L_2	: 1–3–2
Copt.	: 1–2
B and Ephr.	: 1–2–3 [21]

[20] See J. Wagemann, *Die Stellung des Apostels Paulus neben den Zwölf*, in: *Beih. Zeitschr. neut. Wissensch.* 3 (1926), p. 18–186.

[21] The text of B and Ephrem are not fully identical with the Greek. It is remarkable that both deviate in the same way. B reads: 6 . . . *et a te*

In order to find the original text we have to consider several things. If we start from the Greek text which is also found in B and Ephr., we may suppose that Arm. and L_2 try to put the alternatives side by side (Greek: ἢ–ἢ). In addition to this the Armenian text combined the question to come with the revelation to Theonoe. This means that Arm. and L_2 are secondary to Gr.-Ephr.-B. Next we have to compare Copt. with Gr.-Ephr.-B. Undoubtedly Copt. renders a more difficult reading. One wonders why the question to write a letter has been omitted since Paul actually has written an answer. This means that Gr.-Ephr.-B seem to be secondary to Copt. This is corroborated by the end of the epistle which speaks only of Paul's visit to Corinth (vs 16): "Therefore, brother, make haste to come here, so that the church of the Corinthians remains without offence and the stupidity of these (men) may come to light". If Gr.-Ephr.-B are supposed to be original, one has to accept that the question to write in vs. 7–8 has been omitted under the influence of vs. 16. Since, however, vs. 7–8 precedes vs. 16, we doubt whether this can be maintained. For this reason we believe that Copt. has the original reading in this passage.

III 13 reads: "(God) sent His Spirit *διὰ πυρός* into Mary the Galilean". The words *διὰ πυρός* can be found nowhere else. Ephrem, however, seems to know a text with those or similar words, because he writes after "Spirit" the words "totally warm" (*ǰermaǰern*). It appears that these words are not quite clear to Ephrem, because in his commentary he says "this means 'quickly'". The Coptic is not available in this passage. Though we shall deal with the passage presently we may accept that the Greek version is original. There seems to be sufficient reason to omit the words because of their difficulty. The words "Mary the Galilean" can be found nowhere, though L_1 and P read "in Galilea". Also here the Greek text seems to be original. This again is corroborated by the Acts of Paul where we find the same as in the Greek version.[22] Since

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iterum audiamus. 7. *per epistolam aut te ipso adveniente*. 8. *credimus . . . aut rescribe nobis* (the new verse must not begin with *audiamus*, as in in the edition of Boese, but after *epistolam*!). Ephrem: "But therefore the Lord had mercy . . ., that . . . we should hear of you once again the things which we heard of you orally. Either come . . . we believe . . . or write . . .".

[22] Published by C. Schmidt–W. Schubart, *o.c.*

the passage in the Acts is of importance for a number of other deviations in the text, we give the whole passage (p. 8, r. 25–28): *κ]αὶ π[αρ]ελάβετε τὸν λόγον, ὅτι πνεῦμα δυνάμεως ἐπ' ἐσχάτων [κα]ιρ[ῶ]ν [ὁ θεὸ]ς δι' ἡμᾶς κατέπεμψεν εἰς σάρκα τοῦτ' ἔστιν εἰς τὴν Μα[ρίαν τὴ]ν [Γ]αλιλαίαν κατὰ τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, ὃς ἐ[κ]υοφορήθη [. . . . .]. ὑπ' αὐτῆς ὡς ἀποκυῆσε αὐτὴν καὶ γεννῆσαι [Ἰησοῦν] τὸν Χριστὸν* . . . . Apart from the words "the Galilean" which is found here and in the correspondence, we also see that this passage is the source of vs. 14, which, as we said, can be found in some mss. The verse reads in L_1, B and Arm. (according to B): *quae ex totis praecordiis credidit accepitque in utero spiritum sanctum, ut in saeculum prodiret Jesus.* The Armenian version has been influenced by the same passage in vs. 13: "And He sent the Holy Spirit into the virgin at the end of times as it has been described by the prophets before". Here we find the words *ἐπ' ἐσχάτων καιρῶν* and *κατὰ τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον.* This means that the Acts of Paul influenced the contents of the correspondence.

III 22–23 is an addition in L_1, B and Arm. reading: "For you are not sons of the disobedience, but children of the beloved church. Therefore has been preached the time of the resurrection (Arm.: among all)". We may suppose that Eph. 2, 2 and 5, 6 influenced the text.

III 24 rendered some difficulties because it was said in the original text that there will be no resurrection for those who deny the resurrection of the flesh. Therefore one finds in L_1: *illis non erit resurrectio in vitam, sed in iudicium eius.* The same alterations can be found in in B, P and Arm., though Ephr. and Copt. are more or less in agreement with the Greek text.

III 33 in L_1, B and Arm. one finds besides the three examples of the resurrection of the flesh the raising of the son of the widow of Sarfat by Eliah.

From this summary it appears that the text was altered now and then. It appears, however, that these alterations are not very important. For lack of variant readings it is impossible to trace the history of the text, though it appears that Gr. and Copt. usually render the best text.

6. The Relation between the Correspondence and the Acts of Paul

We need not repeat that the correspondence was part of the Acts of Paul. This is not only proved by the Coptic fragments of the Acts of Paul, but also by the influence of some passages in the Acts on the correspondence (cf. III 14). But we still have to answer the question whether the author of the Acts of Paul is responsible for the correspondence or whether he made use of an already existing writing.

In order to answer this question we are going to compare the correspondence with the Acts of Paul. We shall do this in three ways. First we compare the contents of the Acts and the correspondence. Next we look at the place of the correspondence in the Acts of Paul as a whole. Finally we investigate some parallel passages in the Acts and the correspondence in order to find out their relationship.

It appears that the correspondence knows one theme only: the significance of the flesh, or rather: the significance of creation. On theological and christological grounds it is proved that God is the creator of the world and of man and that the flesh will rise. If we compare this theme with the Acts of Paul it can not be denied that this theme is also met in the Acts. In the Acts of Paul and Thecla we meet Demas and Hermogenes as Paul's main opponents both preaching that the resurrection has taken place already (c. 14, cf. II Tim. 2, 18). In this part Paul's preaching is characterized in the following way: *λόγος θεοῦ περὶ ἐγκρατείας καὶ ἀναστάσεως* (c. 5, cf. also c. 12). Nevertheless it can not be said that the Acts were written to refute those who denied the resurrection. Paul is depicted as a missionary teaching that abstinence is the beginning of a new life. This difference, however, is not sufficient to prove that the Acts and the correspondence were written by two different authors. We can even say that a similarity in contents is to be expected. Even if the author of the Acts incorporated an already existing writing into his work, he would have done it only if he was able to agree with its doctrine.

Next we look at the place in which the correspondence can be found. In the Coptic papyrus-fragments of the Acts of Paul we find something about Paul's stay in Philippi (p. 45–49). Paul is

emprisoned. Next we read that messengers are sent from Corinth to Paul with a letter. Then follows the correspondence. The end of III is not available since this part is badly mutilated. For what happened after Paul's stay in Philippi we have to depend on the Greek papyrus-fragments in which we find on p. 6: "From Philippi to Corinth". This means that Paul went to Corinth after his emprisonment in Philippi. In the Greek fragments we read that in Corinth Paul relates everything which happened in Philippi (fragments of it on p. 41–43 of the Coptic text also). At this moment it is not necessary to go into Paul's story, but it is surprising to see that in the Greek text the entire episode in Philippi is missing. The passage starting with "From Philippi to Corinth" is preceded by a description of Paul's stay in Ephesus.

This means that in the Coptic text we find something about the circumstances among which the correspondence was written and that in the Greek text we find something about Paul's adventures after his departure from Philippi. The difficulty, however, is that the Greek text omits the part about Paul's stay in Philippi. Before we continue our investigation we have to deal with this omission.

The reason for the omission may be that in the original Acts Paul's stay in Philippi was missing. If we accept this supposition we are able to infer that the correspondence was added to the text at a later date, provided with a frame dealing with Paul's work in Philippi. This may be attractive, but this idea is contradicted by the words at the beginning of the episode in Corinth: "From Philippi to Corinth". There is no reason to deny that in the copy used by the writer of the Greek papyri of the Acts of Paul something about Paul's work in Philippi was found. The contents of this description are unknown. This means that we have to suppose that the episode in Philippi was deliberately omitted. But why? C. Schmidt the editor of the Greek papyrus-fragments supposed that the omission is due to the fact that roundabout 300, the time to which the fragments go back, the correspondence was already known in an independent form.[23] Though this cannot be denied since the discovery of the correspondence in a manuscript

[23] See Schmidt–Schubart, *o.c.*, p. 98.

of the third century, we wonder whether this is sufficient reason to omit the whole passage about Philippi. The only reason can be that the Greek text summarized the text. This is in agreement with the development of the text of the Acts of Paul which shows a tendency to break up in different small parts which were separately published (cf. *Acta Pauli et Theclae* and *martyrium*).

Now we shall consider the context in which the correspondence is found in the Acts of Paul.

On p. 45 and 46 of the Coptic fragments we read something about the circumstances in which the correspondence was written. It appears that those in Corinth feared that Paul would die. This especially, since Simon and Cleobius have arrived teaching that "There is no resurrection of the flesh, but of the Spirit only, and that the body of man is not a creation of God and also the world has not been created by God, and that God does not know the world, and that Jesus Christ was not crucified, but was an appearance, and that He was not born of Mary nor of the seed of David". After the statement that the epistle is sent to Paul we find the correspondence with its three parts.

The discrepancy about the ideas in Corinth with regard to Paul's future between the introduction and the correspondence is remarkable. In the introduction we find (p. 45, 8–11): "The Corinthians were in great distress concerning Paul that he would leave the world before it was his time". In I 8 (the epistle of the Corinthians to Paul) we read: ". . . we believe as has been revealed to Theonoe, that the Lord saved you from the hand of the lawless one". This means that the expectations with regard to Paul's life are quite different. In the epistle one hopes that Paul will come to Corinth. Striking is the reference to Theonoe. It seems that the correspondence points to a revelation known to the readers of the Acts of Paul, but we do not know anything of such a revelation, though in the Acts of Paul many similar revelations are met.[24]

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[24] On p. 31 (Coptic, ed. Schmidt, p. 54) an angel reveals that Paul will be protected. On p. 51 (Coptic, ed. Schmidt, p. 82; Greek, p. 6, 27–30, ed. Schmidt–Schubart, p. 47) a certain Cleobius reveals that Paul has to go to another city. On p. 52 (Coptic ed., Schmidt p. 83, Greek, p. 7, 3–8, ed. Schmidt–Schubart, p. 50–51) Myrte reveals that Paul will save many in the city of Rome.

No great discrepancies can be pointed to between the summary of false teaching in the introduction and in the epistle. Nevertheless we find some matters in the introduction which are not dealt with in the epistle. Thus we do not find anything about the resurrection of the spirit and Jesus being an appearance. In the epistle we do not find anything about the nature of Jesus' death. It may be of some importance that it is said in the epistle: *οὐδ' εἶναι τὸν κόσμον θεοῦ* (I 15). In the introduction we find: "and the world also, that God did not create it and that God does not know the world". It may be that the introduction clarifies a somewhat difficult passage which was found in the epistle.

It is important to see what happened in Corinth after Paul's arrival from Philippi. This is related on p. 6 and 7 of the Greek papyrus. It is remarkable that nothing is said about the false teachings. C. Schmidt supposed that this was not necessary anymore since Paul had written his letter.[25] We do not think that this explanation is acceptable. It is strange to note that Paul is preaching about steadfastness (6, 11–22). It also remarkable that we do not meet the names of those who wrote the letter or brought it to Paul. It is even more remarkable that a man called Cleobius reveals in the Spirit that Paul has to proceed on his journey (7, 28–30). If we remember that Cleobius arrived in Corinth with false teachings it is hardly possible to imagine that one writer is responsible for the correspondence and the description of the events in Corinth.

The result of this comparison is that there are reasons to suppose that the correspondence was not written by the same author as the Acts of Paul.

Finally we like to point to passages which can be found both in the correspondence and the Acts of Paul.

In the Acts of Paul and Thecla c. 1 we read that Paul goes to Antioch accompanied by Demas and Hermogenes. Then we find a sentence with a number of variant readings which reads according to Lipsius–Bonnet: "But Paul looking unto the goodness of Christ only, did them no evil, but loved them well, so that he tried to make sweet to them all the words of the Lord (and of the teaching and the explanation of the Gospel) and of the birth and resurrection

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[25] See Schmidt–Schubart, *o.c.*, p. 101.

of the Beloved and related unto them word by word the great works of Christ, how they were revealed unto him". Probably it is not necessary to put the words "and of the teaching . . . Gospel" between brackets, but the words "of the Gospel" must be considered secondary, since they are omitted in some Greek manuscripts and the Coptic text. More important is that all our manuscripts apart from the Greek G, the Syriac and one Latin manuscript add: *ὅτι ἐκ μαρίας (τῆς παρθένου* in M and Copt.) *καὶ ἐκ σπέρματος δαυίδ.* This last part which is accepted by C. Schmidt and L. Vouaux,[26] is identical to III 5: "that our Lord Christ was born of Mary, of the seed of David". In both cases the words are directed against those who deny the resurrection of the flesh. It is difficult to say anything definite about the relation between the two passages. This especially because we do not know the original reading of the Acts of Paul. It seems as if the sentence beginning with *ὅτι ἐκ* has been added to *διηγεῖτο* in a rather careless way. If this is true the correspondence seems to have influenced the Acts of Paul. But because we are dealing with a variant reading it can not be made out whether the addition goes back to the original author or to a later copyist.

Of more importance are some parallels in the Greek papyrus-fragments. On p. 8 we find a sermon of Paul during his stay in Puteoli. In this sermon Paul tells how often Israel has been saved from the hands of the lawless ones, but also how often they have lost their heritage. For this reason one has to be more steadfast than they have been. In this passage we find some parallels with III. The first one reads (p. 8, 16–21): "In addition to this He sent prophets to proclaim our Lord Christ Jesus. In their turn (? *κατὰ [τάξι]ν*) they received lot and part (*κλῆρον καὶ μερισμὸν*) of the Spirit of Christ. And after having suffered much they were killed by the people. Since they fell away from the living God in accordance with their desires (*κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας*) they lost the eternal heritage". The parallel passage in III 9–11 reads: "For this reason God of all, the almighty, who made heaven and earth, has sent to the Jews in the first place (*πρώτοις Ἰουδαίοις*) prophets in order to withdraw (them) from the sins. This, because he liked to save

[26] Schmidt, *Acta Pauli*, Leipzig 1904, p. 27–28, and L. Vouaux, *Les Actes de Paul*, Paris 1913, p. 146–148.

the house of Israel. He divided the Spirit of Christ (*μερίσας*) and sent it into the prophets who proclaimed the infallible religion during long times. Now, the ruler (*ἄρχων*) who was unrighteous and who liked to be God, put his hand on them and bound all flesh according to his desire".

Without any doubt some relation exists, but we wonder of what nature. First of all we like to point to some discrepancies. In both passages the prophets have to do the same things. In III it is said that they have to withdraw the Israelites from sin and that they have to teach them the true religion. In the Acts they have to proclaim Christ. It is, however, possible that the word "religion" (*θεοσέβεια*) has a wider meaning and that it also includes the proclamation of Christ, but it is not explicitly said.

An other deviation is the use of the words *κλῆρος καὶ μερισμός* which is a well known biblical expression (cf. Deut. 10, 9; 12, 12; 14, 27, 29; Acts 8, 21; Col. 1, 12 and Hebr. 2, 4). In the Acts we find the word *μερίσας*. In the Acts of Paul the words *κατὰ τάξιν* have been added to the text. These words can be translated by "each in his turn" but also by "according to order". In the last case the prophets are among those who received the Holy Spirit. It may be that this passage has been inspired by the words *πρώτοις Ἰουδαίοις* in III 9. In the Acts we see that the people killed the prophets which is in accordance with Acts 7, 52. In III 11 the devil is responsible for the killing of the prophets. Finally we find in the Acts the words *κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας* with regard to the Jews. In III 11 we find the words *πρὸς ἡδονήν* with regard to the devil. The words *πρὸς ἡδονήν* can raise difficulties as appears from the translation in B: *in concupientia*, L_2: *voluptatibus*. Ephrem: "he bound by human desires", and Arm.: "by sin". We can not exclude the possibility, however, that these variant readings are due to the influence of the text of the Acts of Paul.

The result is that it is impossible to say in which way the passages are related. It may be that the Acts are dependent on the correspondence, but no convincing proof exists.

The second parallel is 8, 25–29: "And you received the Word: God sent a Spirit of strength in the end of times into the flesh, that is into Mary the Galilean according to the prophetic word, which was born by her as a fruit of the body (*ὃς ἐ[κ]νοφορήθη [. . . .]*)

until she gave birth and brought forth Jesus Christ . . .". In III 12–13 we find: "The almighty God, because He is righteous and He did not like to destroy his own work *κατέπεμψε πνεῦμα διὰ πυρὸς εἰς Μαρίαν τὴν γαλιλαίαν*". It is remarkable that in the passage of the Acts this part is called *λόγος*. This means that we are dealing with a definite *kerygma*. It might be that that the author alludes to the correspondence. This in particular because the remarks about the birth of Christ are irrelevant. In this address Paul speaks about Jesus who proclaimed the coming kingdom for which reason man has to flee for the darkness.

A close relation can be seen between this passage and III. We have already pointed to the word "the Galilean". The correspondence, however, shows the words *διὰ πυρός* and the Acts of Paul *δυνάμεως*. The words *διὰ πυρός* are not often met in relation with Christ's birth, but similar expressions occur.[27] It is possible that *ΔΙΑΠΥΡΟΣ* goes back to *ΔΥΝΑΜΕΩΣ*. It is, however, also possible that we have to prefer the more difficult reading and that the author of the Acts of Paul altered an already existing text.

Concluding our remarks with regard to the relation between the correspondence and the Acts of Paul, we may say that there are some reasons to suppose that the author of the Acts incorporated an existing writing into his work. The correspondence does not fit into the Acts as a whole and some passages in the Acts seem to go back to similar passages in the correspondence. On the other hand we were able to point to some passages in the correspondence which were influenced by the Acts after the moment when the correspondence was added to the Acts of Paul.

7. An Explanation of the Correspondence

Very often the correspondence has been influenced by passages taken from the Pauline epistles. For this reason it is remarkable

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[27] Cf. E. A. Budge, *Legends of our Lady Mary . . . from the Ethiopic Manuscripts*, Oxford–London 1933, p. 116: "How couldst thou carry and contain Him, the Fire that could do all things . . .", p. 108: "And Mary answered and said unto the angel, 'Thou art fire, and thine apparel is coals of fire; frighten me not, O fire . . .'", p. 119: "Thine honourable appearance, and Thy awesome announcement, and Thy burning fire . . . I cannot gainsay . . . I am a child, and a woman and unable to receive fire".

that in both letters we find the simple *χαίρειν* in the praescript. In this respect the correspondence is in agreement with the epistles of Ignatius (apart from the one to the Philippians), which also do not give more than *πλεῖστα χαίρειν*.

The names Simon and Cleobius, are also known from Eusebius, *H. E.* IV 22, 5. It appears that these names were connected with heretics in the time of Hegesippus. In the *Didascalia* and *Constitutiones Apostolicae* (VI 8, 1) we meet them again. Here Simon is identified with Simon Magus. These writings know about them (VI 10, 1): *Et erat quidem illis omnibus aequaliter lex, ut Lege et Prophetis non utantur et ut omnipotentem Deum blasphem[ar]ent et resurrectionem non credant.* It is possible that this information goes back to the correspondence. Anyway, we may be sure that these two persons were supposed to be two notable heretics.

We have already spoken about the position of Paul in the correspondence. This position is in agreement with what we find about the twelve apostles and Paul in the early church.

The christological ideas of the author are difficult to grasp. We might speak of a "pneumatic christology" or "Geistchristologie", but it is hazardous to go any further. We are able to point to III 5, where we read that Jesus Christ was born of Mary . . . of the Holy Spirit, to III 10, where it is said that the prophets received parts of the Spirit of Christ, and III 13, where it is said that the Spirit was sent to Mary. These passages do not help us very much in determining the author's christological ideas. They can easily be explained by the influence of the New Testament.

More important is the way in which the epistle writes about the false teachings. Here we find:

a. One must not use the prophets,
b. God is not almighty,
c. There is no resurrection of the flesh,
d. God did not create man,
e. The Lord did not come into the flesh, nor was born of Mary,
f. The world is not of God, but of angels.

We see that these are negative statements only. Nothing is said about the doctrine of the heresy. We also miss anything about the death of Christ.

With help of the summary given above we are going into each part.

a. The Prophets

In his commentary Ephrem says that the false teachers rejected the prophets, but accepted the gospel. This means that, according to Ephrem, one accepted the New Testament, but rejected the Old Testament. This is in agreement with III 36: "And if somebody keeps to this rule which has been received from the blessed prophets and the holy gospel, he will receive his reward". The word "prophets" circumscribes the Old Testament, like Irenaeus in *adv. Haer.* II 27: *Universae Scripturae et Prophetiae et Evangelia.* For this reason we find in III that the prophets received parts of the Spirit of Christ.

We know of many heretics who rejected the Old Testament. We may point to Marcion, but we also know that Simon and Basilides believed that the prophets were inspired by the angels who created the world (Ir. I 23, 3 and I 24). According to Saturninus the prophets are partly belonging to the devil partly to the angels who created the world (Ir. I 24, 2). The rejection of the Old Testament is not typically gnostic, since Valentinus did not reject it (Ir. I 7, 3) and Bardaisan made use of the Old Testament (Epiphanius, *Haer.* 26, 6). According to Clement, *Strom.* III 12, 82, Tatian attributed the law to an other god.[28]

It is worth while to see that it is usually said that the prophets were inspired by the creator of the world. This means that they were not able to prophesy about Christ. Thus one was able to point to a discontinuity between the prophets and Christ. The first were inspired by the creator, the second by the true God. The correspondence rejects this idea by stating that God, the creator, did not only send the prophets to the Jews, but also that He gave them parts of the Spirit of Christ that they were able to teach the true religion (III 9–10). Here we see the close connexion between God-creator-prophets-Jesus Christ.

The ideas of the correspondence are wholly in agreement with what is found in the early church. Already in I Petr. 1, 11 it is

[28] See R. Liechtenhan, *Die Offenbarung im Gnosticismus*, Göttingen 1901, p. 54–68.

said that Christ works in the prophets. The same opinion is often met in Tertullian (*de praescr.* 13 [29] cf. Ir. IV 20, 4 and 33, 9). Of some importance is Ignatius, *Magn.* 8, 2, according to whom the prophets lived in accordance with Christ and were persecuted for that reason. Again we see that only one God witnessed both in the prophets and in Christ. This means that the prophets could not have been inspired by the devil. For this reason we find in III 11: "The *archoon* because he is unrighteous and because he liked to be God killed them (sc. the prophets) and bound all flesh according to his will". Now we understand the deviation from the New Testament where it is said that men killed the prophets (cf. Mt 5, 12, Lk 11, 47, Acts 7, 52). The correspondence likes to show that the ruler of the world cannot possibly be the same one as he who sent the prophets.

b. The Almighty God

In his commentary Ephrem writes that according to the false teaching the God who inspired the prophets, is not almighty. This is true, because it is obviously meant that the God of the Old Testament is not almighty. In early Christian literature we discern that God being creator is the almighty one. Theophilus, *ad Autolycum* I 4, says that God is almighty, because He is the master of all and because the creation is his work.[30] In the struggle against those who leave the world to another God, the word "almighty" is often used. Irenaeus writes that God can not be called almighty if there are two Gods (II 1, 5 and II 6, 2). The same we see in Cyrillus of Jerusalem *Cat.* 8, 3 and Origen *de Princ.* I 2, 10. For this reason we wonder whether the heretics themselves said that God is not almighty. It is very well possible that this is a conclusion drawn by the opponents.

In the answer the word "almighty" is used twice. In the first place in vs. 11 quoted above and next after the passage about the

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[29] The text reads: *id Verbum filium ejus appellatum in nomine Dei varie visum a patriarchis, in prophetis semper auditum, postremo delatum ex spiritu patris Dei et virtute in virginem Mariam, carnem factum in utero ejus et ex ea natum egisse Iesum Christum.*

[30] Cf. F. Kattenbusch, *Das apostolische Symbol* II, Leipzig 1894, p.520–534.

archoon. We read: "The almighty God, because He is righteous and because He did not like to destroy his work, had the Spirit come down upon Mary the Galilean by way of fire, in order that by the same flesh in which the evil one reigned, since it got lost, the evil one was defeated and was convinced that he is no God". Here again we see the relation between God the creator and God the almighty. Because he is the creator he saves the world and the flesh. God being the creator has to be a Saviour. The author of the correspondence says that it was necessary for Christ to come into the flesh in order to save the flesh. In this way we get the relation between God being the creator of the flesh and God being the Saviour of the flesh. In anti-gnostic literature we often see that one points to Jesus' healings in order to show that God is willing to save the body. Thus we find in Clement, *Strom.* III 104: *οὐχὶ ὁ σωτὴρ ὥσπερ τὴν ψυχήν, οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἰᾶτο τῶν παθῶν;* and in Ephrem, *adv. Haer.* 43, 10: "'Tadelenswert ist der erste, der den Körper erschuf'. (Dann) auch sein Arzt . . . Unser Herr fand einen blinden Körper und gab ihm das Licht".[31]

c. *The Resurrection of the Flesh*

In the New Testament we find some who deny the resurrection of the flesh (I Cor. 15, 12, II Tim. 2, 18, cf. Acts 17, 32). Here we are dealing with an isolated opinion. We do not know whether this idea had its consequences with regard to the doctrine of creation and the christology. In Polycarpus, *Phil.* 7, things are different. Here we find some who deny that Christ came into the flesh and those who deny the resurrection of the flesh. We often find the same opinion in early christian literature: II Clem. 9, 1, Justinus *Dial.* 80, 4 Ir. I 22, 4; 27, 3 (Marcion) I 10, 1; I 23, 5 (Simon Magus) and Tertullian, *de resurr. carnis.*

In the answer we see that Jesus has come into the flesh to save all flesh (III 6 and 16). The idea that Christ had to come into the flesh to save the flesh is well known (cf. I Clem. 49, 1, II Clem. 9, 4 and Barn. 5, 6). At the end of the epistle we see some proofs

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[31] See E. Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers, Hymnen contra Haereses*, in: *Corp. Script. Christ. Orient.* 169 (Syr.) and 170 (transl.), Louvain 1957, p. 172 (Syr.) and p. 153 (transl.).

of the resurrection, which were obviously inspired by the preaching of the early church. The seed clothed with a body we find in I Cor. 15, 37 and I Clem. 24, 5, the example of Jonah in Mt 12, 40 and Tertullian, *de resurr. carnis* 32, and the history of Elisah's grave in *Constitutiones Apostolicae* VI 30, 5.

d. The Creation of Man

With (*d*) we can combine (*f*), in which is spoken about the world which is not of God, but of angels. Under (*a*) we have already dealt with examples speaking about the world being created by angels. In III it is not explicitly said that the world has been created by God. Nevertheless it is said that God created the flesh. The emphasis on the creation of the flesh was caused by the author's wish to emphasize Christ's coming into the flesh. If the author speaks about God's πλάσμα, he actually means the flesh (III 13).

e. Jesus was born of Mary

In the New Testament we find already that Christ has not come into the flesh (I John 4, 2–3 and II John 7). Especially in the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarpus this subject is often spoken about. (Pol., *Phil.* 7, Ign., *Trall.* 9, *Magn.* 11, and *Smyrna* 1, 1–2). Ephrem writes in his commentary that the correspondence deals with the followers of Bardaisan. They say that Christ went through Mary without receiving anything from her. The same we find in Tertullian about Valentinus (*adv. Valent.* 27, cf. also Ir. I 7, 2). Tertullian makes a difference between Marcion and Basilides, according to whom Christ was an appearance, and Valentinus and Apelles, who supposed that Christ was clothed in human flesh (Tert., *de carne Christi* 1, *de resurr. carnis* 2, cf. Ir. I 24, 4, about Basilides). In the correspondence this subject is not dealt with.

It is remarkable to see that in III it is accepted that Christ was born of Mary without evidence. This belief goes back to the ones who were with Jesus (vs. 4–5). We are obviously dealing with a very old article of faith: "And any spirit, who does not confess . . ." (John 4, 3 and Polyc., *Phil.* 7, 1).

We see that not only the false teachings but also the refutations are known from ancient Christian literature. It is worth while to see that the false teaching has been rejected in one connected way.

The starting point is that Christ has come into the flesh. Next it is said that therefore the flesh will be saved (III 4–8). This again proves that God created the flesh. This is corroborated by the prophets who possessed parts of the Spirit of Christ and were persecuted by the ruler of this world. But again, some similar ideas we find in Tertullian, *de resurrectione carnis* 2.

Finally we have to deal with the nature of the false reaching. One has pointed to Bardaisan (Vetter and Ephrem in his commentary), Simon Magus (Muretow) and Apelles (Rist). We reject the idea that Bardaisan is meant. He did not reject the Old Testament and he did not teach a physical dualism. We must, however, not forget that a difference exists between Bardaisan and his followers. At a later stage we see that in Bardaisan's doctrine a sharp division is made between body and soul.[32] Ephrem knew Bardaisan's doctrine in this form. For this reason Ephrem was justified in saying that the epistle was written against the followers of Bardaisan. The correspondence, however, goes back to a time well before 170. At that time Bardaisan (154–223/3) was still unknown.

The idea that the letter has been written against Marcion has one difficulty, since Marcion did not teach that the world was created by angels. The doctrine of Apelles, a pupil of Marcion, seems to be more in agreement with the false teaching. But also here we do not find that the world was created by angels. Tertullian, *de praescr. haer.* 34, *de carne Christi* 8, *de anima* 23, only knows that according to Appelles the world was created by a fiery angel.

The opinion that the correspondence was directed against Simon Magus is attractive. He taught, according to Irenaeus, that the angels created the world (I 23, 3–4), that the prophets were inspired by the angels and the resurrection of the body took place at the moment that man was baptized. Nevertheless it is hazardous to think that the correspondence was written against his ideas only.

This means that we are not able to say that the correspondence was written against one particular kind of heresy. The correspondence probably describes a tendency in the early church. This ten-

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[32] See H. H. Schaeder, *Bardesanes von Edessa in der Überlieferung der griechischen und syrischen Kirche*, in: *Zeitschr. Kirchengesch.* 51 (1932), p. 21–74.

dency can be found especially in Asia Minor as appears from Ignatius. This is in agreement with the place were the Acts of Paul were written. We may only say that the tendency is not yet a "doctrine" which can be found in the well known gnostic systems.

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